

Foster the traditional character of New Hampshire downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods by encouraging a human scale of development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life

Principle #2

Case Study

Downtown Keene



Former City Manager Patrick MacQueen attributes Keene's success to several factors:

- 1) A long tradition of community planning and caring about downtown.
- 2) Keene's relative geographic and transportation isolation.
- 3) Willingness of many residents and local businesses and industry to make the time, energy, and financial commitments necessary to the long and protracted work of developing, selling, and implementing improvements to the downtown.
- 4) Recognition that when local residents and visitors think of a community, they think first and foremost of the downtown.

The City of Keene has a long tradition of pride and stewardship of its downtown. Keene's downtown today tells a story of a community that cares about the planning and maintenance of its center. Downtown Keene has become a cultural center and magnet for the Monadnock region.

Along with redevelopment projects and improvements, the initiative and active involvement of the citizens of Keene has brought more activity and interest to the downtown. Community spirit and creativity have allowed for and encouraged downtown activities such as Keene's First Night and the

now famous Halloween Pumpkin Festival celebrations. The result is an active, vital downtown which is a source of community pride and identity.

In the early 1990s a non-profit group formed to acquire the grand old Colonial Theater. Another group working on overall downtown improvement joined with the Theater group and the local economic development corporation to devise a financing plan for major renovations to the theater. This beautiful, restored old Theater has become a cultural and entertainment mainstay for the entire Monadnock region.

- 5) Recognition that the downtown serves as the 'Welcome Mat' for any community, and should be the cultural, business, educational, entertainment, transportation, government, and community center for the municipality.
- 6) Recognition that spreading these functions out through the entire community is poor planning that creates sprawl and destroys the downtown center that is the focal point of identity for the community.
- 7) Citizens, citizen groups and organizations, and local business and industry have been the driving forces of downtown change, working with local government rather than relying on local government as the primary driving force.



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Keene community leader David Putnam points out that the original settlers of Keene demonstrated an early concern for wise planning when they all agreed to pick up their houses on both sides of Main Street and move them back a considerable distance in order to afford an impressively wide Main Street. The beautiful and unique Main Street that leads into the heart of Keene is their legacy.

The Monadnock Economic Development Corporation played a role in redeveloping the EF Lane Block, which created a beauti-

ful downtown hotel in a historic department store building. The City added a parking deck on land behind the EF Lane Block, for hotel and general downtown parking.

Keene's downtown, with its traditional New England architecture and civic design, is attractive and inviting. The restaurants, theatre, museums, civic buildings, and variety of stores offer places for people to socialize, shop, learn, dine, do government business, and generally enjoy the downtown's beauty and ambiance.



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Lyme Common

Surrounded by homes, businesses, and civic buildings, picturesque Lyme Common is the year-round community gathering spot for residents and visitors. On Route 10,

at the heart of the community, Lyme Common hosts pancake breakfasts, concerts, and markets in the summer, and congregating snow travelers in the winter.



Laconia Savings Bank, Moultonborough

Laconia Savings Bank acquired the 180 year-old Harold Mohr House on Route 25 in Moultonborough in 1995, with the goal of “preserving and maintaining the historic aspects of the property for the Moultonborough community.”

Working with the Town and State Historical Societies, the Bank donated the

original barn to the local Historical Society. The barn was dismantled and reassembled on a new site. The Bank restored the farm house and built a new barn reminiscent of the old one to house the new banking offices and vault. The Bank opened for business in 1996.

Sawyer's Jewelry, Laconia

The Sawyer's Jewelry building upgrade grew out of a downtown revitalization effort initiated by the City of Laconia and the business community.

The initiative eliminated an existing pedestrian mall which had diverted traffic around the central business core, and reestablished motor

vehicle traffic into and through the downtown area.

The traffic flow change has helped improve business activity and resulted in additional investments, both public and private, in the downtown area.



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Henniker Community School

The Henniker Community School (grades K-8) combined new construction with renovation to create a community school that preserves traditional community building patterns while meeting today's needs. In 1995 voters approved a plan of additions and renovations to Henniker Elementary School and Cogswell Memorial Middle School. A house, barn, and old town fire station were demolished and removed from

adjacent properties. The historic Grange Hall that stood between the two schools was moved 1/10th of a mile to the site of the old fire station. With the site cleared, new construction designed in the traditional style of the historic school structures linked the two schools to create one expanded community school.

(Just off Main Street/Western Avenue between the Library and Police Station)



Newmarket Mill - Brownfield Project

The Essex Mills were built more than 150 years ago on the Lamprey River in downtown Newmarket. Some of the Mill property had been contaminated with hazardous material over time so the Town wanted to encourage cleanup and reuse of the structures. The environmental cleanup is now complete and the first phase of redevelopment includes approximately 30 one- and two-bedroom condominiums, and was 90 percent completed as of summer 2002.

A river walk along the Lamprey and full public access to the river is part of the Project. A new bridge across the river will connect the residential units to downtown.

(From Route 108 downtown, turn onto Bay Road just north of the bridge over the Lamprey River, then turn right into Bryant Rock.)

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Commercial Alley, Portsmouth

Ceres Street, a pedestrian alleyway in downtown Portsmouth's old harbor district, connects Bow Street with Market Street. A mix of shops and professional offices are located on the lower

level of the buildings, with residential units above. The well-lit, landscaped, and warm brick-lined passageway signals business vitality and invites pedestrian travel.



Before



After



Littleton Main Street

Littleton, one of New Hampshire's first Main Street communities, began its Main Street program in 1997. In five years, over \$2 million has been invested in building improvements, guided by the National Main Street Center's four-point approach to downtown revitalization.

Encouraged by a \$1,000 facade improvement grant, the owners of Northern Lights Music, the building

pictured here, spent more than \$50,000 to restore the building's historic exterior color palette. With design assistance and seed-grant funding from Littleton Main Street, investments have been made in the exterior appearance of nearly three-fourths of Littleton's downtown buildings. Named NH Main Street Community of 1999, Littleton was a 2002 Great American Main Street semi-finalist.

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Belmont Mill, On Route 140, in Belmont center

The Gilmanton Village Manufacturing Company began producing cotton and woolen goods in the historic mill known as the 'Brick Cotton factory' in 1833. Demolition was ordered after the property was taken by tax deed in 1995, and the structures surrounding the core building were torn down. A group of concerned citizens petitioned the court to halt the demolition. The order to halt demolition was received the day the bell was removed from the tower.

A design charrette generated possibilities for reuse and the community worked together to find viable options.

After the charrette the Town secured Community Development

Block Grant funding for a building program that included multiple uses. The building is now a vibrant center of community life. The cupola, which is featured in the Town Seal, again houses the bell that once awoke the village.

A child care center on the ground floor has its own entrance and direct access to the playground. The second floor holds a large community function room and kitchen, and the Community Action Program offices. The third floor is home to a local family health clinic. The top floor Food For Thought Cafe is run by the NH Technical College collaborative culinary arts program.

Belmont Mill 1995



Belmont Mill 2001



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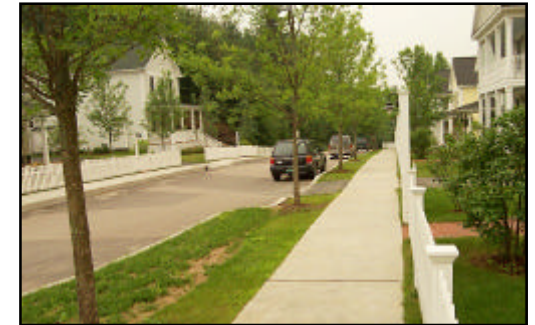
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Palisades, Stowe Vermont

Palisades, a private development located just off South Main Street in Stowe Village, Stowe, Vermont consists of single-family homes on lots as small as 5,300 square feet. The houses have front porches facing a village-scale road, which

forms a partial grid parallel to heavily traveled Vermont Route 100. Shared garages are set back from the street. New sidewalks and street trees complete the scene of Stowe's newest village neighborhood.



The Common Man Inn, Plymouth

The owner of the Common Man Restaurants sought to preserve the historic character of an 80 year-old Plymouth building where popsicle sticks had been manufactured, while providing modern and efficient inn and conference facilities. This re-use project renovated the 50,000 square foot building on a 3.8 acre

lot for a 37 room inn, a 160 seat restaurant, and a three-section conference center for groups up to 180 people. A large, brick boiler room has been transformed into a spa and lounge. A house on the site is being renovated for the new sports center and the Rhino bike shop. (I-93 Exit 26)